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PREVIEW FAR CRY 6

PREVIEW GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

ISSUE 78 OCTOBER 2021



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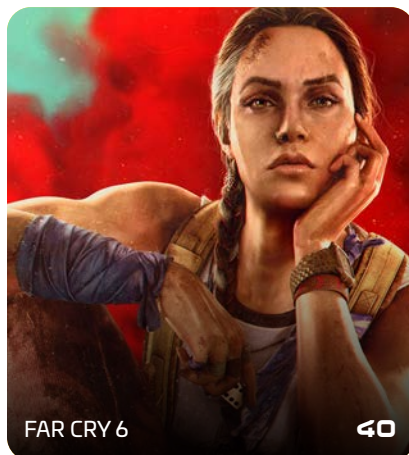
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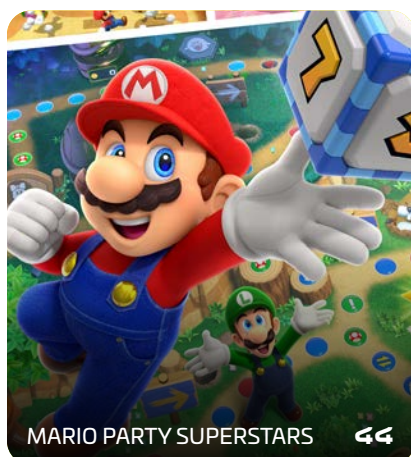


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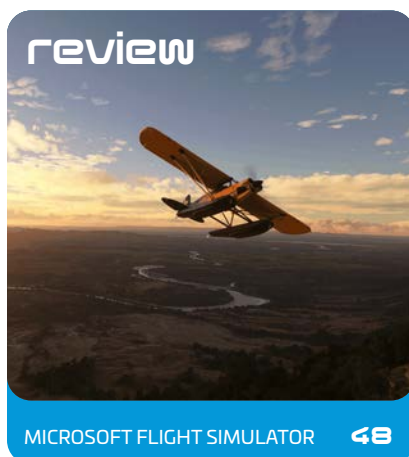
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GENERATION GAP

We're rapidly approaching the one-year anniversary of the Xbox Series X/S and PlayStation 5, which means we're finally starting to get a real sense of what these consoles are capable of from a technology standpoint. Sure, most new games are still releasing for the previous and current console generation, but that's beginning, just barely, to change.

July marked the launch of *Microsoft Flight Simulator* for Xbox Series X/S, the very first Microsoft-published console game that's not also available on Xbox One. As you can read in our review later in this issue, it's a technical powerhouse, bringing the entire planet to your TV screen by using the systems' hefty hardware in conjunction with the power of cloud streaming.

While the PlayStation 5 did launch with a few true exclusives, it was this summer's *Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart* that provided the clearest example yet of how the new hardware will evolve gaming, with its seamless, loading-screen-free transitions between dimensions.

We're also getting more and more announcements of games that will only come to the new consoles. (You can read about one such title, EA's reboot of sci-fi horror

classic *Dead Space*, in the news section.) As with previous generational transitions, exclusives will become more and more frequent in the years ahead, until we finally have to say goodbye to the PS4 and Xbox One—two stellar consoles that have delivered amazing experiences over the past eight years.

We're also glad, however, that the shift to the new generation hasn't been too abrupt. Despite record-breaking sales of the new Xboxes and PlayStations, these consoles remain pretty difficult to get your hands on, with supplies selling out shortly after they go on sale. Both Microsoft and Sony have pledged to ramp up production, but we may be well into 2022 before anyone who wants a new system can easily get one. (Of course, that's to say nothing of Nintendo's approach. The Switch continues to sell gangbusters, as the Big N proves once again that power isn't everything.)

Whether you've been able to get a new console or not, rest assured this issue has plenty to offer you. Most of the games featured in the pages to come are playable on either current- or previous-generation hardware, so no one should feel left out. Leading the way is *Hot Wheels Unleashed*, the racing game that brings the collectible die-cast cars to life like never before. We also have previews of *Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy* and *Far Cry 6*. Finally, for our readers who love the portable power of the Switch, we've got a preview of *Mario Party Superstars*, a collection of remastered boards and minigames from throughout the series.

As the transition to the new generation speeds up, be sure to keep reading *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

Josh Harmon and Mollie L Patterson
EDITORS

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Gamecenter
october 2021

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DEAD SPACE REBOOT ANNOUNCED, DEVELOPER CONFIRMED

Electronic Arts revealed during EA Play Live 2021 that it's releasing a reboot of the original *Dead Space*, and Motive Studios is at the helm.

The reboot will follow the same basic narrative as the 2008 sci-fi/horror classic, in which engineer Isaac Clarke battles undead necromorphs aboard the *USG Ishimura*. However, Motive is rebuilding the game "from the ground up" in the Frostbite

engine and will deliver "an improved story, characters, gameplay mechanics, and more," according to an EA press release.

This will be the first game for which Motive Studios is the sole developer, but the game's director previously worked at Ubisoft. According to a report from VGC, Eric Baptizat will lead the game's development team. *Assassin's Creed* fans might recognize Baptizat as the creative director on *Valhalla*, as well as lead game designer on *Origins*, *Unity*, and *Black Flag*.

Baptizat isn't the only high-profile game maker working on the reboot. Creative director Roman Campos-Oriola previously served in the same role on Ubisoft brawler *For Honor*, and art director Mike Yazijian has credits on *Batman: Arkham Origins* and, more importantly, *Dead Space 2*. Meanwhile, the game's lead level designer, Gary Stewart, worked on *Mass Effect 2* and 3 at BioWare, another EA studio.

Before you get too worried that Motive is going to stray from the course of the original *Dead Space*, Campos-Oriola told IGN that the "improvements" the team wants to make to the story are more about "what came after" the original game. "We're like, 'Aw man, that's interesting if we could reference that, or if we could make a link to that,'" Campos-Oriola said. In other words, hardcore fans of the series might be pleasantly surprised by the Easter eggs and hidden references that Motive includes in this retelling.

Another major improvement is that the new *Dead Space* will eliminate loading screens, thanks to the SSDs of the Xbox Series X/S and PlayStation 5. Senior producer Phil Ducharme also noted that it won't have microtransactions.

Keep an eye on Walmart.com, where you'll be able to pre-order *Dead Space* for Xbox Series X/S and PlayStation 5.



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SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PCUBISOFT AND BUNGIE TEAM UP
TO TAKE DOWN CHEATERS

Ubisoft and Bungie might be competitors when it comes to the live-service gaming market, but they're teaming up to take down a common enemy: cheaters.

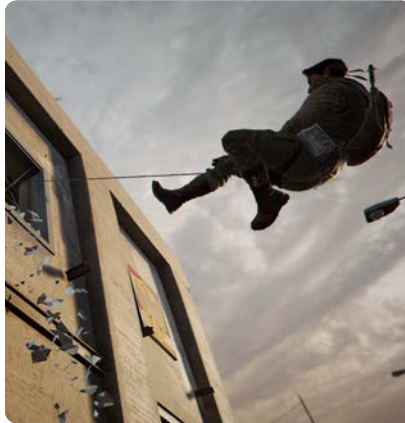
According to a report from GamesIndustry.biz, the two behemoths filed a joint

lawsuit against Ring-1, which sells cheats to players via a subscription model. Players have used cheats like aimbots that they've procured from Ring-1 in *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege* and *Destiny 2*.

Filed in the state of California, the suit claims that Ring-1's cheats "impair and destroy not only the game experience, but also Plaintiffs' overall business and their reputation among their respective player communities."

Ubisoft and Bungie are suing for "millions of dollars" in damages and profits that Ring-1's cheats have allegedly cost them. Additionally, the companies claim that Ring-1's use of key art from *Siege* and *Destiny 2* on its website is an act of copyright and trademark infringement.

You can find *Rainbow Six Siege* and *Destiny 2* on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

YOU CAN NOW UPGRADE YOUR PS5
STORAGE, BUT IT'S COMPLICATED

Sony has started rolling out a system software update for the PlayStation 5 that lets you upgrade the console's memory capacity, but you won't be able to just plug in a USB hard drive and expect it to work with the console.

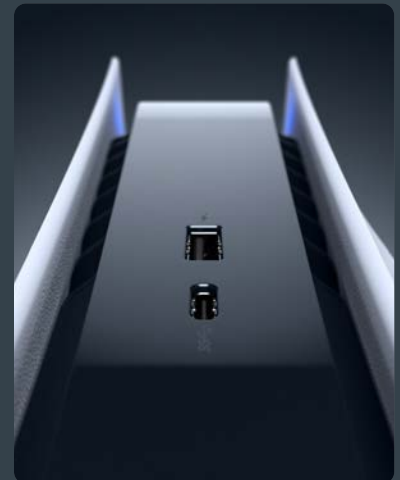
Beta version 2.0-04.00.00 makes it so that players can upgrade their PlayStation 5 consoles with additional SSD storage. However, the specifications for compatible SSDs are, well, specific. Drives must be PCIe 4.0 M.2 SSDs between 250GB and 4TB in size and have a heat sink.

Alongside the release of the system software beta, memory manufacturer Seagate just announced its first line of SSDs that are compatible with PS5. The Firecuda 530 SSD comes in 500GB, 1TB, 2TB, and 4TB sizes, ranging from \$140 to an eye-watering \$950.

The update also introduced 3D audio to televisions, better information clarity

for games on the home screen and in your Library, and expanded trophy tracking, among other upgrades.

For everything PlayStation 5, visit Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.





SAINTS ROW IS BRINGING THE SERIES BACK DOWN TO EARTH

The *Saints Row* series reached meteoric heights with its last main entry, making the Boss the ruler of an entire galaxy. But for its long-awaited follow-up, developer Deep Silver Volition is going back to basics with a reboot of the franchise.

The next *Saints Row* game is simply called *Saints Row*, and it's returning the series to its gangland roots. Taking place in Santo Ileso, a desert city inspired by the American southwest, the new *Saints Row* once again has players taking over the streets as the Boss and launching a brand-new criminal empire.

As the Boss, players will interact with three new compadres—Eli, Neenah, and Kevin. Each has their own strengths. Eli is a business genius, Nina is a grade-A getaway driver and mechanic, and Kevin is a thrill-seeking hotshot with a soft spot for his friends. You can also team up with another Boss in two-player co-op and build up the Saints together.

Together, the four of you will fight the three rival factions that call Santo Ileso

their home. Los Panteros is the original Santo Ileso gang, and they like to get down and dirty with bats and other heavy melee weapons. Marshall Defense Industries is a private military conglomerate that owns Santo Ileso's commercial territory. Last but not least are the Idols, self-styled anarchists that are in it for the clout as much as they are the cash.



Santo Ileso is big, but not big enough for four gangs. The new location boasts nine different districts, each with its own theme. El Dorado is all about glitz and grime, Monte Vista features pool parties and gated communities, and the Financial District is the home of Santo Ileso's tallest skyscrapers. It's a perfect spot for some wingsuiting, one of *Saints Row's* new gameplay mechanics.

Saints Row is currently in development for last-gen and current-gen hardware. Even though it was just announced, it already has a release date: February 25th, 2022. Mark your calendars and pre-order at [Walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com) or your local Walmart store.

GAME DELAYS STACK 2022



What's bad for 2021's release schedule is great for 2022's. An avalanche of delays for games originally set to launch in 2021 mean that 2022 is going to be stacked with great releases.

Top of our list is the still-officially-untitled sequel to 2018's *God of War*, the universally acclaimed reboot of the franchise. In June, developer Sony Santa Monica delayed the PlayStation 4 and 5 game to 2022.

Next, there's another cross-gen PlayStation exclusive: *Horizon Forbidden West*. Once planned for a holiday 2021 launch, it'll now be out on February 18th, 2022.

Then there's *Rainbow Six: Extraction*, the four-player co-op take on Ubisoft's popular PvP shooter, *Siege*. *Extraction* (originally *Rainbow Six: Quarantine*) was delayed twice—once to September 2021, and then to January 2022.



Meanwhile, developer Tango Gameworks delayed its PS5-exclusive *GhostWire: Tokyo* from this October to 2022 because it is "focused on protecting the health of everyone at Tango," according to a statement.

The good news is that you will be able to find all of these games at [Walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com) or your local Walmart store when they launch.

5 to play



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DEATHLOOP

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / DEVELOPER ARKANE LYON / PLATFORMS PS5, PC / RELEASE DATE 09.14.2021

In Arkane's *Dishonored* series, you always had the option of being sneaky. But you may not have time for that nonsense in this new sci-fi first-person shooter. In *Deathloop*, you play as a man caught in a *Returnal*-esque time loop, forced to live the same day over and over. To escape this nightmare, your only hope is to assassinate eight targets before the day ends and everything resets (well, except for your memory). Oh, and did we mention there's a rival assassin trying to take you out? Playable solo or against other people whose lives are also on repeat (and who play as the aforementioned rival), this action/adventure game has you using a variety of guns, melee weapons, *BioShock*-y powers, and yeah, okay, fine, stealth, to take out your targets (and anyone else who gets in your way) in an attempt to bring this deadly homage to *Groundhog Day* to a close.

In *Deathloop*, you play as a man caught in a *Returnal*-esque time loop, forced to live the same day over and over.



LIFE IS STRANGE: TRUE COLORS

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX / DEVELOPER DECK NINE GAMES / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 09.10.2021

"*Life is Strange: True Colors* is a narrative adventure game about Alex Chen, a 21-year-old who recently moved to Haven Springs, Colorado, to reunite with her brother Gabe, who arrived in the town on a search for their missing father. Every *Strange* game has an element of the supernatural that connects with the unique characters in the game. In *True Colors*, Alex has the psychic power of empathy, and can connect to the emotions of other characters to gain insights into their feelings, learn new information, and help the people around the town. In fact, our favorite thing about *Colors* is the impactful, emotional narrative, and how we tied unique gameplay moments into Alex's empathy power to help make this story resonate with players. *Colors* is also a standalone game because we wanted any new players to be able to have a great experience without having to play the previous games."

CHRISTOPHER SICA, GAME DESIGNER, DECK NINE

"In *True Colors*, Alex has the psychic power of empathy, and can connect to the emotions of other characters to gain insights into their feelings."



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WARIOWARE: GET IT TOGETHER!

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER NINTENDO EPD, INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE DATE 09.10.2021

A lot has changed in the three years since the last *WarioWare* game, 2018's *WarioWare Gold*. But one thing that hasn't (and probably never will) is Wario's love of weird, off-kilter microgames. The first *WarioWare* made for the Switch, *Get It Together!* boasts over 200 different microgames you can play on your own or with friends and family—including, oddly, a lot that involve personal hygiene. What has changed is that, for the first time, you'll get to play as Wario, his pals, and the employees of WarioWare, Inc. Using the portly portmanteau's dash move, for instance, you get to spread toothpaste on a toothbrush, remove a gentleman's facial cleanser mask, and get out of the way when some birds, uh, do something we'd rather not mention here. You'll even get to pick your favorite characters to make use of their abilities in any situation. Sure, you could flip that turtle over with Wario's dash, but if you'd rather have his magical pal Ashley do the job with a hex, you're free to pick her instead.

Get It Together! boasts over 200 different microgames you can play on your own or with friends and family.

5 to play

4

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LOST JUDGMENT

PUBLISHER SEGA / DEVELOPER RYU GA GOTOKU STUDIO / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4 / RELEASE DATE 09.24.2021

"*Lost Judgment* is an action game that tells a dramatic suspense story set in modern Japan, one that shares the same universe and time axis as the *Yakuza* series, though the stories unfold independently a few years apart. In it, you take the role of private detective Takayuki Yagami, who's tasked with investigating the impossible case of two crimes committed at once. As for the gameplay, it's a little difficult to come up with comparable titles because we set out to make *Lost Judgment* a fully unique experience, but *The Last of Us* series and *Detroit: Become Human* are probably close in terms of focusing on the narrative themes; *Watch Dogs* when it comes to the arsenal of tools the player uses to get closer to the mystery; and for the exhilarating action combat, it's similar to our own *Yakuza* series."

KAZUKI HOSOKAWA, CHIEF PRODUCER, SEGA

"As for the gameplay, it's a little difficult to come up with comparable titles because we set out to make *Lost Judgment* a fully unique experience."





5

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TALES OF ARISE

PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO / DEVELOPER BANDAI NAMCO / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 09.10.2021

"For as long as the franchise has been around, *Tales* has always stayed true to its signature character design, environments, and battle system. But, as it is with all things, there is always a desire to push the envelope and unlock hidden potentials, and I believe that's exactly what the team's vision was for *Tales of Arise*. The visual style was created using the Atmos Shader, developed by the *Tales* Team. The whimsical watercolor style that flows through the environments and the character artwork really elevates the mood and quality of the game. We've added new minigames such as fishing, searching for lost Dahnhan artifacts, and raising livestock, and increased the customizability of gameplay mechanics. With the skill tree, you will be able to unlock new moves and attributes [for each character], so there is definitely a lot to look forward to and re-discover. *Tales of Arise* really takes the franchise to a new level."

ABELINA VILLEGAS, ASSOCIATE BRAND MANAGER, BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC.

"As it is with all things, there is always a desire to push the envelope and unlock hidden potentials, and I believe that's exactly what the team's vision was for *Tales of Arise*."

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HOT WHEELS

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SMALL CARS,
BIG RACING POTENTIAL

BY MOLLIE L. PATTERSON

"We learned that when you're far from your safe territory, you should not be afraid. We tried, we tested, we refined gameplay ideas until they felt right."

MICHELE CALETTI, *HOT WHEELS UNLEASHED* EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
MILESTONE S.R.L.
DEVELOPER
MILESTONE S.R.L.
PLATFORMS
XBOX SERIES X/S,
PS5, SWITCH, XBOX
ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
09.30.21

For over 25 years, Italian video game developer Milestone S.r.l. has made a name for itself as one of the premier studios when it comes to racing simulations. From franchises like *WRC*, to *MotoGP*, to *Monster Energy Supercross*, the team in Milan has continued to craft bigger and better games that capture the spirit and realism of a variety of different styles of racing.

For its latest release, however, Milestone has shifted gears to a game that's quite different from

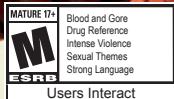
anything it's done before—not to mention much smaller.

Hot Wheels Unleashed adds a new spin to the studio's vast experience in the racing genre by switching the focus away from realistic, life-sized cars to their miniature die-cast counterparts. While the project may still be a racing game at its core, it's one that has forced the entire team to come up with new ideas and gameplay mechanics beyond anything they've done before.

Thankfully, for Milestone, it was a challenge that excited the studio.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

...DIE, DIE AGAIN.



ARKANE LYON **Bethesda**

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Warning: Don't try these tracks in the real-life versions of these cars.

"We learned that when you're far from your safe territory, you should not be afraid," *Hot Wheels Unleashed* executive producer Michele Caletti told us. "We tried, we tested, we refined gameplay ideas until they felt right."

While the team may be far more experienced with racing sims, Caletti said that many on staff are also fans of arcade racers. Trying to find a good blend between those two styles takes a lot more trial and error than re-creating realistic cars and racing conditions, but that variety of



“There’s an on-paper phase, where we try to figure out the extremes, like the fastest and the slowest, and then we plan how to compensate.”

MICHELE CALETTI, HOT WHEELS UNLEASHED EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

personal tastes amongst the crew really helped in that regard.

Once the initial ideas for what kind of game *Hot Wheels Unleashed* would be were in place, one of the bigger challenges was figuring out how to translate toy cars into interactive, controllable roadsters. The team came up with a set of “basic” cars that would set some standards for how vehicles would handle, and from there had to make decisions on a car-by-car basis.

“There’s an on-paper phase, where we try to figure out the

extremes, like the fastest and the slowest, and then we plan how to compensate, to allow the slowest one to be a potential winner,” explained Caletti. “Some cars just deserve their stats, like the ‘Winning Formula.’ Some others require some imagination, like the ‘Duck ‘n Roll.’ But that’s part of the fun.”

One of the bigger problems in balancing all of the vehicles in a racing game like *Hot Wheels Unleashed* is also one of the game’s strengths: the huge diversity and creativity of those vehicles. Since its creation in 1968,

RENOWNED RACERS

Much like the toy line it’s based off of, *Hot Wheels Unleashed* will feature a wide variety of vehicles, including some well-known rides from beloved franchises. To help introduce some of the game’s special cars, we asked executive producer Michele Caletti to give us his thoughts on what makes a few of those iconic inclusions so special.

T.M.N.T. Party Wagon

*Teenage Mutant
Ninja Turtles*

“I have the real Hot Wheels one. In case this isn’t enough, just look at its design: so blocky and yet so fast with that big wing. Pizza!”



Snoopy’s Doghouse

Peanuts

“It’s so crazy. Snoopy is super cute and [battles the] Red Baron in his mind, right? Somehow his dreams for speed are fulfilled with a V8 engine. Give him a jump and he’ll really get flying.”



K.I.T.T.

Knight Rider

“An icon for those who have grown up in the ‘80s. And now that the ‘80s are cool again, how could we miss it? ‘Michael, I think we should engage the Nitro.’ ‘Fine with that, K.I.T.T!’”



Time Machine

Back to the Future

“Marty: ‘You made a time machine... with a DeLorean?’ Doc: ‘Well, why not use a nice car.’ I have this one too, but with the wheels in flight position. Too bad, this would prevent some tasty drifting.”



Batmobile

Batman

“While for some other cars jumping, boosting, or drifting is justified by their Hot Wheels status, for the Batmobile, this is just standard business. Is there some potential as a race car? Let’s find out...”

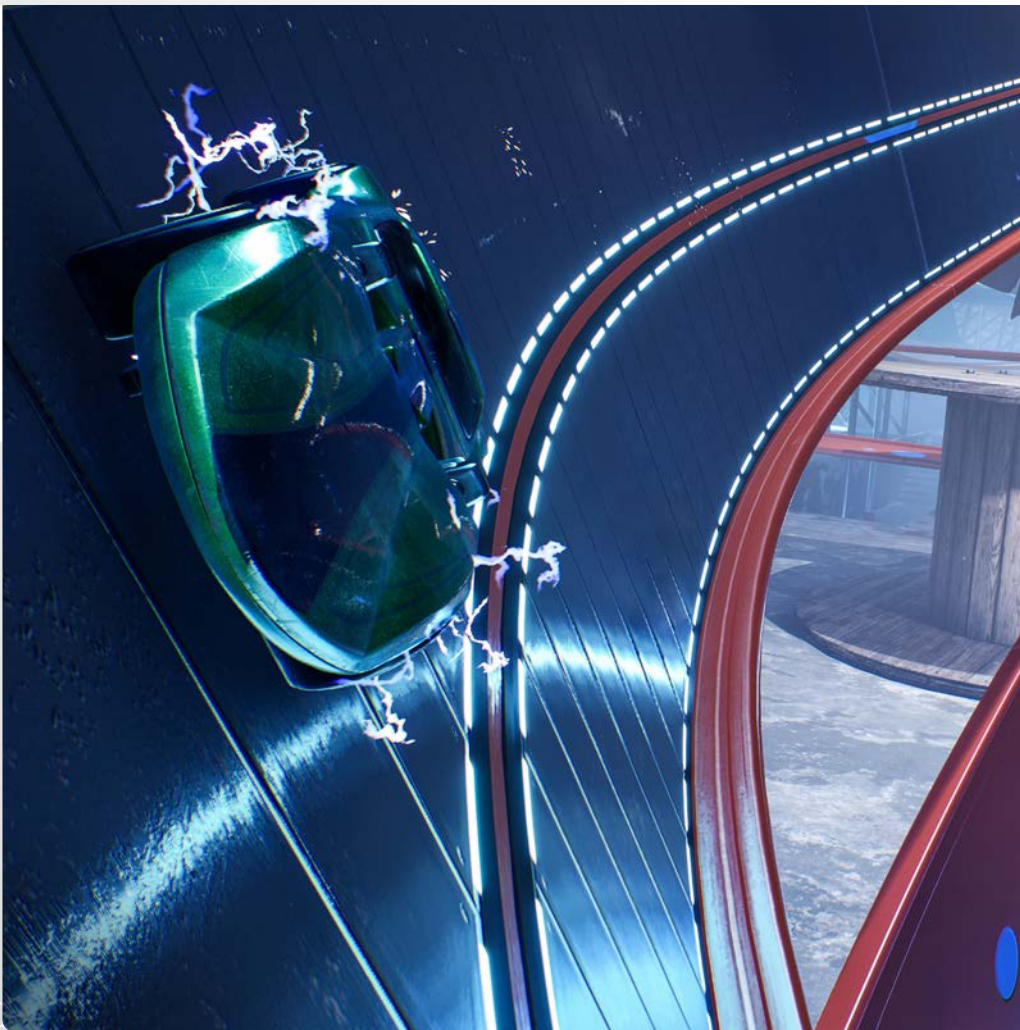


the Hot Wheels toy line has seen more than 11,000 model variations, with everything from toys based on real-world cars and trucks, to fantasy creations, to even replicas of automobiles from movies, television, and children's media. When the game launches, it'll feature 66 cars covering a wide variety of vehicle styles and types—including some very famous modes of transportation (see sidebar "Renowned Racers"). From there, Milestone plans to support *Hot Wheels Unleashed* for at least a year after launch with additional DLC. While Caletti couldn't divulge any exact plans for that extra content just yet, he did tell us that we can expect additional Hot Wheels Origins options, more cars from real manu-

The tracks for *Hot Wheels Unleashed* resemble toy race tracks existing in real-world locations, just with some extra flair and possibilities that only video games can bring.

facturers like Aston Martin, BMW, and McLaren, and even more special vehicles from iconic brands like *Street Fighter*, DC Comics, *Masters of the Universe*, *Barbie*, and *Scooby-Doo*.

As important as all of those vehicles will be, cars are no good without somewhere to drive them. The tracks for *Hot Wheels Unleashed* resemble toy race tracks existing in real-world locations, just with some extra flair and possibilities that only video games can bring. While the game will feature a robust track editor that players can use to build their own courses (see sidebar "Built for Speed"), what they might not expect is that the team at Milestone



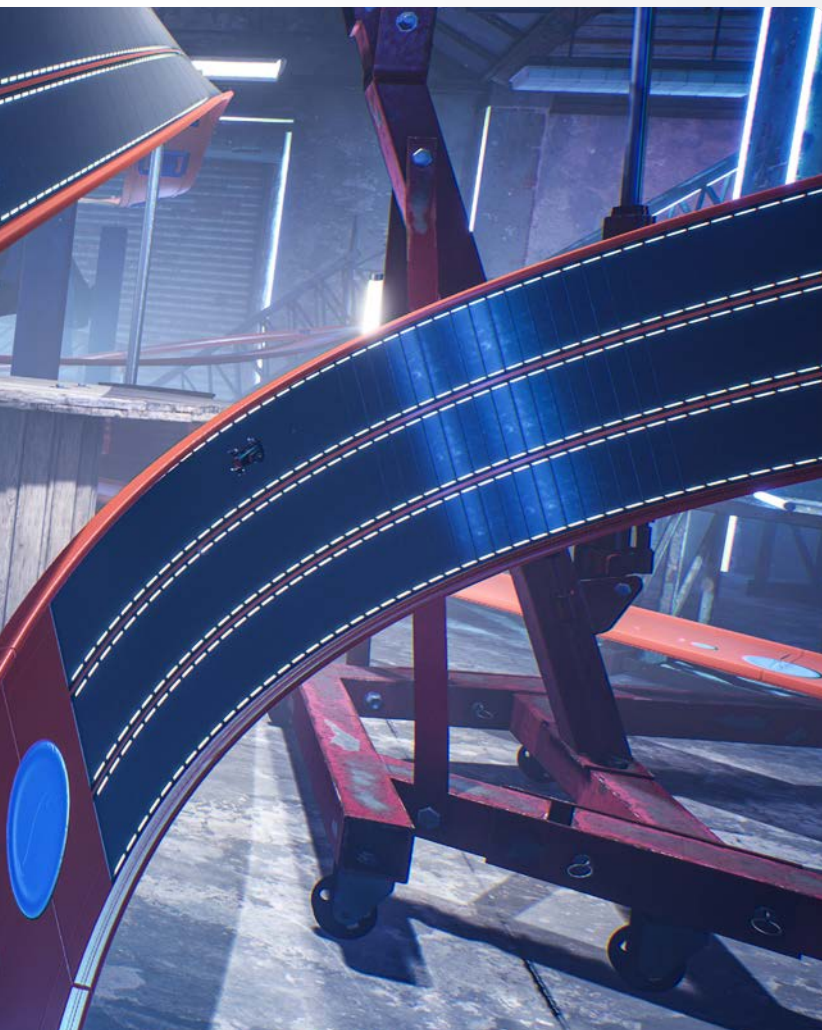


Will the Magic 8-Ball secretly be the best car to pick if you want to win? Better not tell you now.

used that same editor themselves to build the runs featured in the game. According to Caletti, even though players can create tracks in mere minutes using the editor, the studio spent a lot of time, care, and attention on designing those official tracks—especially since the studio’s prior experience was so heavily focused on real-world circuits.

“We started creating tracks, and sometimes we needed to go back and refine the environments,” he explained. “It was all new for us. Some were too crowded, some too empty, or too tight. [Once] we felt comfortable creating tracks, we knew that the levels were okay, for us and players alike.”

Including the race courses themselves, another element the team had to get a handle on were the special features that line those courses,



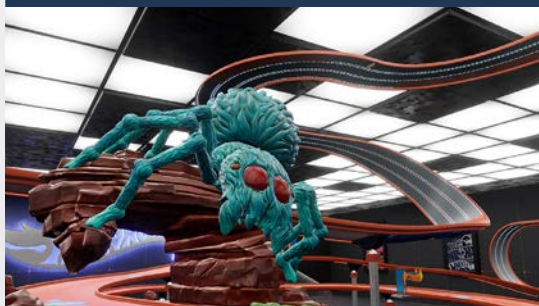
BUILT FOR SPEED



When players hop into *Hot Wheels Unleashed*, they’ll find a variety of elaborate and exciting tracks ready and waiting. For some, however, part of the thrill of racing comes from doing so on courses they’ve created themselves.

For those who want to try their hand at designing tracks worthy of a Hot Wheels playset, *Hot Wheels Unleashed* will come with a built-in track editor—one that holds some serious potential.

“It’s powerful,” executive producer Michele Caletti assured us. “You can do pretty much anything, because you can snap track modules, bend and twist them, and you can use the environment to create something really unique.”



Players will be able to set their tracks in locations inspired by the real world, such as classrooms, skateparks, or skyscrapers. There, objects in the area can either be obstacles to avoid or assistance in constructing more intense sections of track. And, because cars don’t respawn automatically once they leave the road, savvy creators can even craft some more creative shortcuts.

“You can wander around and rejoin the track. It’s something present in the tracks we made, but players will surely exploit it,” Caletti added.

HOT WHEELS YOUR WAY

Part of the potential in bringing die-cast toy cars to life in *Hot Wheels Unleashed* is the amount of customization that's possible for them when in video game form.

One example of that personalization is the Livery Editor, where players will have a wide array of options for changing up the visual appearance of their favorite cars. Another is the Rarity System, which not only showcases different classes of cars, but also a method for upgrading all of those vehicles. Either through wins in the City Rumble mode, or by dismantling previously unlocked vehicles, players can earn materials to improve various aspects of their go-to rides.

"You'll be able to dismantle cars you don't like or don't need—my heart burns all the times I do that, but no real Hot Wheels are harmed in the process—to obtain more gears, [so you can] bring your favorite cars to [the] upper classes," explained executive producer Michele Caletti.

inspired by memorable parts from Hot Wheels sets throughout history. Some are environmental hazards that will keep players on their toes during every lap, like giant snakes biting at cars or spiders shooting webs. Caletti told us that figuring out how to translate those Hot Wheels parts from toy to game was "challenging, but not frustrating." Among the biggest hurdles for the team were figuring out how to keep things fair for players by offering cues for which parts do what, nailing down the proper behavior for hazards, and "tuning to have the right balance between chaos and fun."

Still, Caletti offered up, sometimes chaos can be fun too. "Let's admit it, seeing a friend being bitten or

trapped by a spider web, or trampled by a giant boulder, is part of the fun of the game."

The hope for Caletti and the rest of the team is that anyone—no matter their age, skill level, exposure to racing games, or knowledge of Hot Wheels—will be able to experience that fun in *Hot Wheels Unleashed*. And, to help achieve that goal, he and the rest of the team have had some extra special help.

"The game had to be super fun, period. We wanted to have a game that could be enjoyed by people like me, and my daughter," Caletti told us. "We ran some scientific play testing, we ran some non-scientific (but satisfying) home testing with our kids, and the result is: fun." 🎮

"Let's admit it, seeing a friend being bitten or trapped by a spider web, or trampled by a giant boulder, is part of the fun of the game."

MICHELE CALETTI, HOT WHEELS UNLEASHED EXECUTIVE PRODUCER





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preview

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MARVEL'S GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO (OR FIVE)

BY JOSH HARMON

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER
EIDOS-MONTRÉAL
PLATFORMS
XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
SWITCH, XBOX ONE,
PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
10.26.21



In one sense, *Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy* marks a departure for Eidos-Montréal. In another, it's a chance for the developer to do what it does best.

Since its founding in 2007, the studio has rightfully earned a reputation for delivering fresh takes on established games. The team has revived the venerated *Deus Ex* franchise to great acclaim, rebooted the classic *Thief*, and taken over for the finale of the latest *Tomb Raider* trilogy.

Guardians—an action game that puts players in the role of Peter Quill, aka Star-Lord—represents the first time Eidos-Montréal will design a game without an existing interactive template to look back on. But it's also another chance to distill a beloved property down to its core elements and deliver a game that feels new, with two films from writer-director James Gunn and a long comics legacy fresh in the minds of fans.

"Our two biggest sources of inspiration from the movies were easily the music and the humor," said senior creative director Jean-François Dugas. "These are elements that we embraced and really tried to add our own unique spin to throughout the game."

Of course, the team also "dug through 50 years of *Guardians of the Galaxy* history" in the comics, as Dugas put it. Particularly inspirational was the run that began in late 2008,

■ Star-Lord's blasters let him deal ranged damage, but he can still get up close for melee attacks.

written by Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, which helped solidify the modern lineup. The in-game designs for main team members Drax and Gamora, for instance, are a new spin on their comics looks, as is the game's version of Mantis, one of the many side characters who make an appearance throughout the story.

"We were inspired by the great creators before us," Dugas said. "Their influence helped us to envision something unique yet familiar that will, hopefully, surprise players in many ways."

One aspect that will surely feel distinctive to fans is the game's story, which offers up a remixed take on

"Our two biggest sources of inspiration from the movies were easily the music and the humor."

JEAN-FRANÇOIS DUGAS, SENIOR CREATIVE DIRECTOR



the characters' origin stories. In this universe, the galaxy is still recovering from a massive war between Thanos and the Kree, a conflict that ties into each character's background and how they first came to find one another. It's an intriguing jumping-off point that helps deliver on another important element of any *Guardians of the Galaxy* adventure: an emotional core.

"We created a background story that would give a common source of sorrow to all of our characters—not just the Guardians," Dugas said. "The big baddies have suffered from the same pain as everyone else. They all lost something, someone. The theme of loss and grief is at the heart of what holds back the characters in the game or makes them do questionable things. They all hope to fix what cannot be fixed."

Like in the movies and the comics, it's this past trauma that makes the Guardians unite and discover they're stronger together. "When the game starts, the Guardians are mercenaries, more or less a marketing ploy to make some money,"



Dugas explained. "As the threat facing the galaxy increases, they will have to become the best version of themselves, overcoming their own personal limitations, and opening up to the group, becoming a true family, stronger than ever."

It should come as no surprise to any *Guardians* fan that these team dynamics will feature prominently throughout. Not only will the Guardians bicker and banter, but players will also be able to make choices,

Fans of the movies will recognize familiar sights like Knowhere (above), as well as unfamiliar characters from the comics, like Lady Hellbender (top).

through Peter Quill, that impact the relationships between all the Guardians and cause the story to branch off in different directions. While the major beats and eventual outcome will be the same, how events unfold will be up to the player.

Of course, given that this is an action game, the combat also needs to reflect those team dynamics. To fully capture the spirit of the Guardians, Eidos-Montréal went to great lengths to ensure that every character feels





■ I am Groot. I am Groot. I am Groot. I am Groot. I am Groot.

both distinct and true to their character during a fight.

"Drax is the tank—he goes in brute force and can stagger enemies," Dugas explained. "Gamora is the stealthy assassin, so she's great at inflicting massive bursts of damage and does even more when an enemy is already staggered. Rocket is the area-of-effect guy with his explosive gadgets. Groot is the protector, the defense man. He can slow down the enemies or immobilize them. Peter is the jack of all trades. He can shoot, use his jet-boots, melee, and use his own gadgets."

Just because the characters have specializations, however, that doesn't mean the game will shoehorn you into using them the same way in ev-

"We deliberately did some overlap between the abilities of each character, so the game remains flexible and encourages players to use different tactics."

JEAN-FRANÇOIS DUGAS, SENIOR CREATIVE DIRECTOR

ery fight. "We deliberately did some overlap between the abilities of each character, so the game remains flexible and encourages players to use different tactics," Dugas noted.

While Peter—and the player—can call on the other Guardians to use their special abilities, at the end of the day you're only directly in control of one character. And as you might expect, building a combat system that employs four AI-controlled allies presents some unique challenges. "How do you make Peter feel awesome on his own without making the Guardians feel useless?" Dugas said. "How do you make the Guardians super cool to look at and use without stealing the fire from players' hands?"

Finding that balance required a lot of "very hard" work and "constant iteration," according to Dugas. "Ultimately, we made sure the Guardians

WE KNOW THE GAME, AND WE'RE GONNA PLAY IT



Much like in the James Gunn movies, licensed music plays a big role in *Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy*. Since this version of Peter Quill left Earth during the 1980s, the soundtrack has shifted to that decade.

Beyond giving players a chance to listen to some absolute bangers, the music will also reinforce the characters and themes of the story, according to senior creative director Jean-François Dugas.

"We carefully chose every single song in this game," Dugas said. "A lot of them are about acceptance and overcoming the odds. I can fairly say that they speak to our Guardians' journey."

Among the '80s hits that made the cut are Bonnie Tyler's "Holding Out For A Hero," Hot Chocolate's "Every 1's A Winner," and Joan Jett's "Bad Reputation." Another artist confirmed for the soundtrack is Rick Astley, the singer-songwriter made infamous by the Rickroll.

This, of course, raises an important question. Given that Peter's been in space since childhood, has he been listening to "Never Gonna Give You Up" unironically all this time, blissfully unaware of its status as an internet prank?

"Peter probably doesn't know about the Rickroll," Dugas said, laughing. "He just knows the song he liked as a kid."



were capable on their own during fights. Without killing an enemy super quickly, they can wear them down over time. We make the Guardians more efficient on the battlefield if the player stays engaged in the fight. If you remain passive in the background, the Guardians will start to struggle and will require your support."

Of course, we'd be remiss if we discussed the game's combat without mentioning its most distinctive—and brand-appropriate—feature: music. "When we started conception, we knew music would play the role of a character in the game," Dugas explained. "We wanted that role to speak to the main character's influences on his youth as an Earthling, and we also wanted it to play an emotional support role for some of the scenes. And finally, since we're building a game, we wanted to find a way to use it in gameplay."

Enter the Huddle. Throughout each battle, you'll build up a momentum gauge as you fight. Once it's full, you can press a button to make Peter deliver a motivational speech, cobbled together from your choice of snippets and inspired by the lyrics of some of his favorite '80s songs. Do well, and you'll boost your teammate's morale, allowing them to be more effective in combat. And after the Huddle, you'll get to listen to the

track that inspired Peter's speech, too (see sidebar).

A decade ago, it would've been almost unimaginable for the Guardians of the Galaxy to be starring in such a high-profile, big-budget game. At the time, they were easily among the least known of Marvel's heroes. In the wake of two blockbuster films, however, superhero fans around the world have come to know and love

"The Guardians are fundamentally human. They have beautiful qualities, they're terribly flawed, and full of paradoxes."

JEAN-FRANÇOIS DUGAS, SENIOR CREATIVE DIRECTOR

these misfits. No other characters have seen their profiles boosted so high, so quickly, by the Marvel films.

According to Dugas, there's a simple and important reason for that meteoric rise, a reason the team hopes to recapture with this new game. "The Guardians are fundamentally human. They have beautiful qualities, they're terribly flawed, and full of paradoxes—just like all of us. It is also a group of individuals that wants to belong, that wants to be accepted," he said.

"What's not to love about that?" ©

■ The new Guardians designs draw from a variety of sources in the movies, comics, and real world. (Don't ask about the llama.)

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FAR CRY 6

TROPIC THUNDER

BY JOSH HARMON

What defines *Far Cry*? Is it open-world mayhem? Out-there humor? Action-packed missions? All memorable aspects of the series, to be sure, but there's another word that more accurately encapsulates its identity: revolution.

Even when past entries have placed you in the role of a cop or a mercenary, the gameplay tells a different story: You work your way across a region, using whatever supplies you can scrounge up to dismantle the existing power structure piece by piece. The defining action of *Far Cry* isn't to shoot or to drive or to explore, but to topple.

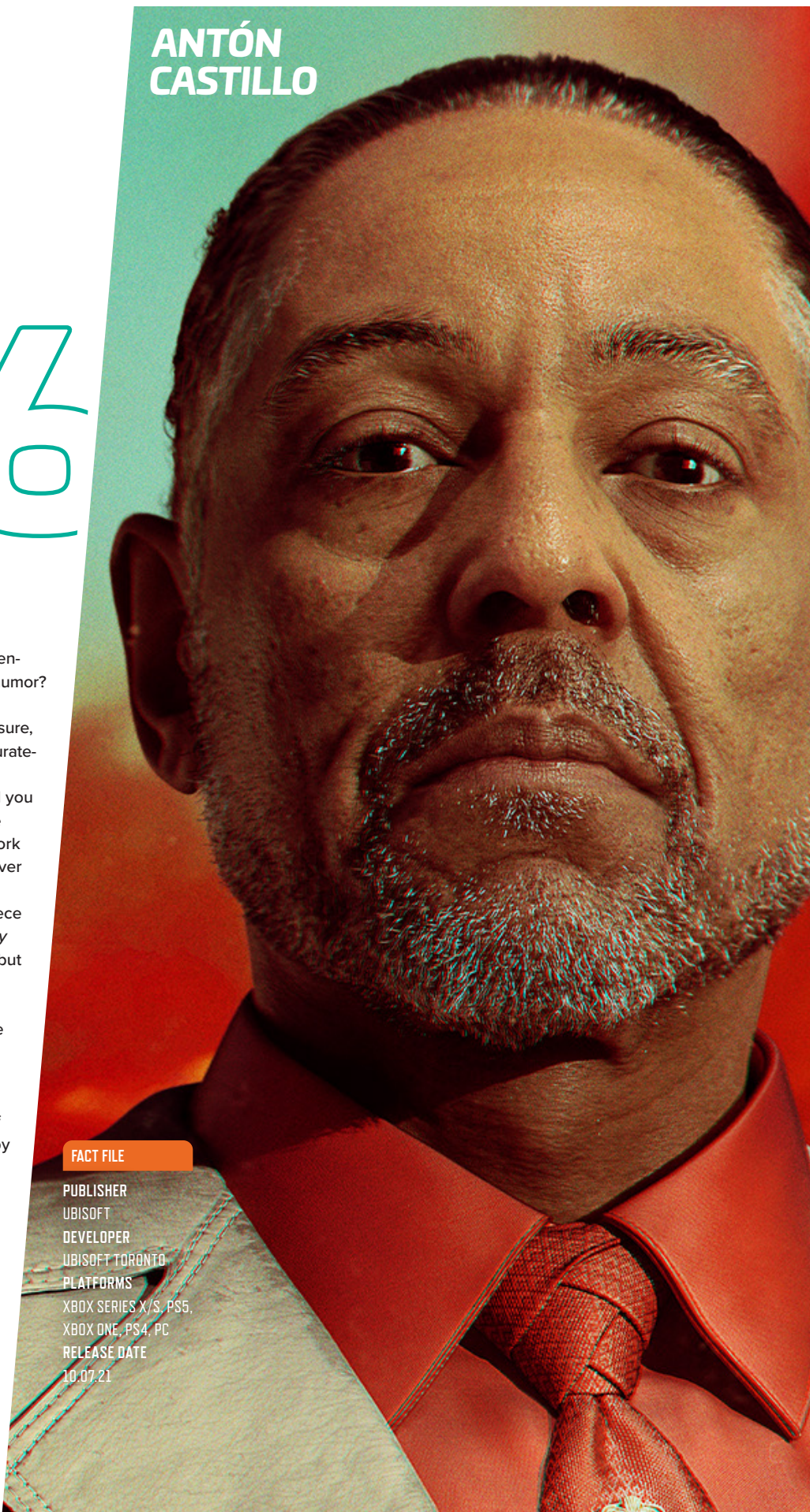
In that sense, *Far Cry 6* is the franchise embracing its truest identity. The upcoming sequel casts players in the role of Dani Rojas—customizable as either a man or woman—a reluctant guerrilla fighter on the island nation of Yara. When trying to flee the country by boat, Dani survives a violent encounter with Yaran dictator Antón Castillo (Giancarlo Esposito). In the bloody aftermath, Dani decides to join up with the revolutionary group Libertad, take down Castillo, and reclaim Yara for its people.

To deliver on the "guerrilla fantasy" that Ubisoft says is central to the game, you'll wage war across

ANTÓN CASTILLO

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
UBISOFT
DEVELOPER
UBISOFT TORONTO
PLATFORMS
XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5,
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE
10.07.21



**CLARA
GARCIA**



■ Juan Cortez may dress (and party) like he's on vacation, but rest assured: He's a serious revolutionary.

Yara's jungles, beaches, small towns, and, in a first for the series, a highly urbanized capital city. You'll be vastly outnumbered, but you can make up the difference by relying on stealth and infiltration, stashing your weapons to wander the streets incognito, if you so choose. Then again, there's nothing that says you can't go in guns blazing, either.

And those guns will make you feel like a true freedom fighter, too. In addition to creaky firearms left over

You'll wage war across Yara's jungles, beaches, small towns, and, in a first for the series, a highly urbanized capital city.

CRAZY FOR YOU



Not to be dismissive of *Far Cry 6*'s compelling setting, but one of Ubisoft's most exciting reveals won't actually be part of the main game. No, what has *Far Cry* fans everywhere salivating is the game's season pass, which includes three episodes that let players get into the minds of the series' most iconic villains.

In the first, you'll see through the eyes of *Far Cry 3*'s Vaas, played once again by Michael Mando (coincidentally, Giancarlo Esposito's *Better Call Saul* costar). Next up, you'll return to *Far Cry 4*'s Himalayan nation of Kyrat to play as the homicidal dictator Pagan Min (ubiquitous voice actor Troy Baker). Finally, in the last chapter, *Far Cry 5*'s religious zealot Joseph Seed (Greg Bryk) takes center stage. Given that all three of these villains are either dead or vanquished, we're intrigued to see how these new stories connect back to the original games—and if they connect to each other or to *Far Cry 6*.

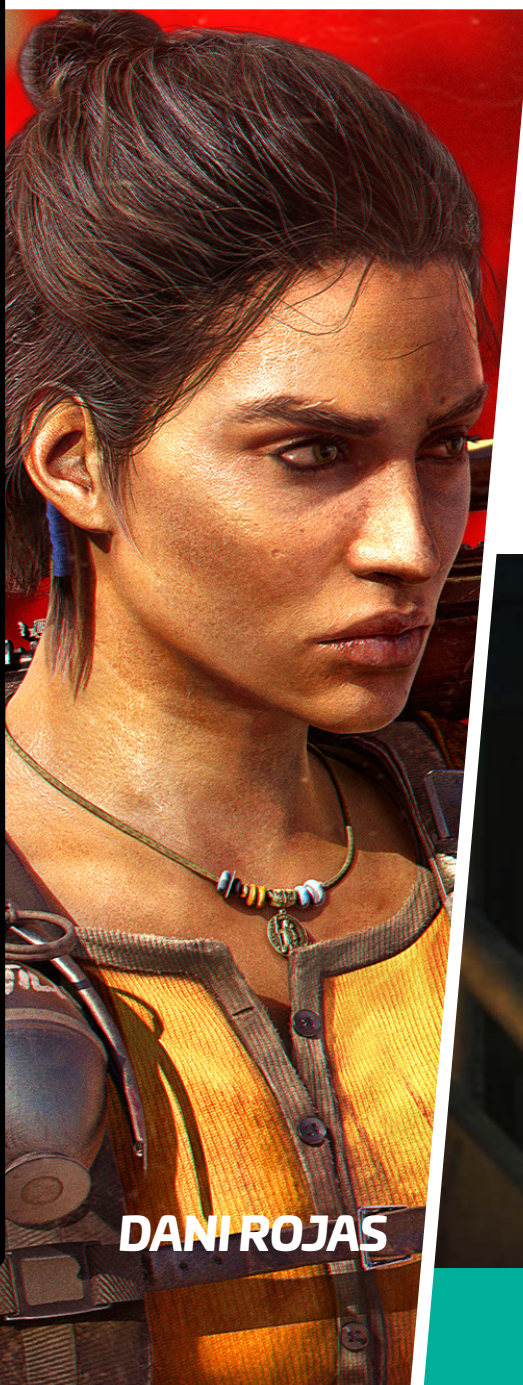
As if that wasn't enough to whet your appetite, the *Far Cry 6* season pass also includes one additional goodie: a remastered version of *Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon*. This standalone spin-off is set in a zany, '80s-inspired dystopia, complete with more lasers and neon than your eyes can handle. Also, dinosaurs.

You can get access to the season pass by purchasing either the Gold or Ultimate Edition of the game.



from the previous revolution, Dani will also have access to makeshift weapons crafted by former KGB spymaster and current Libertad ally Juan Cortez. Some of these guns look downright scary, like a minigun powered by an old motorcycle engine. Others are decidedly more silly, like a launcher that shoots CDs and plays the '90s earworm "Macarena" on a loop. (In real life, that's probably a violation of the Geneva Conventions.)

You'll also be able to equip "Supremos," weaponized backpacks that offer you special abilities. The Furioso, for instance, briefly launches you off the ground and spits out a fiery cloud beneath you,



DANI ROJAS




You'll also be able to customize vehicles with offensive capabilities to wreak even more havoc.

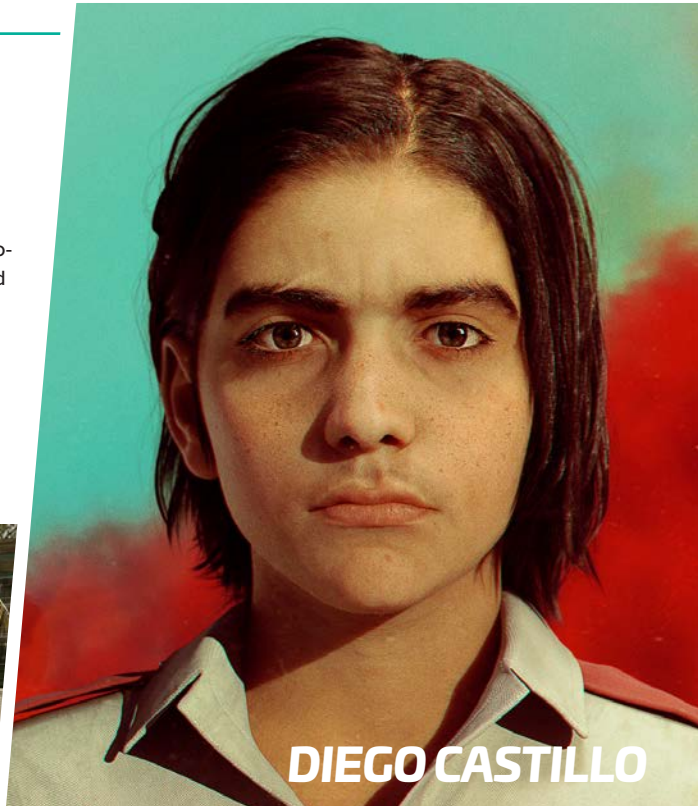
making it an excellent choice for close-quarters crowd control. The Exterminador, on the other hand, lets you fire off a barrage of missiles like some kind of Caribbean Boba Fett. While Ubisoft has highlighted some of the most explosive options so far, other Supremos will enhance your capabilities in subtler ways, aiding in stealth and navigation.

As if all that wasn't enough, you'll also be able to customize vehicles with offensive capabilities—mounted weapons and battering rams—to wreak even more havoc. There's even

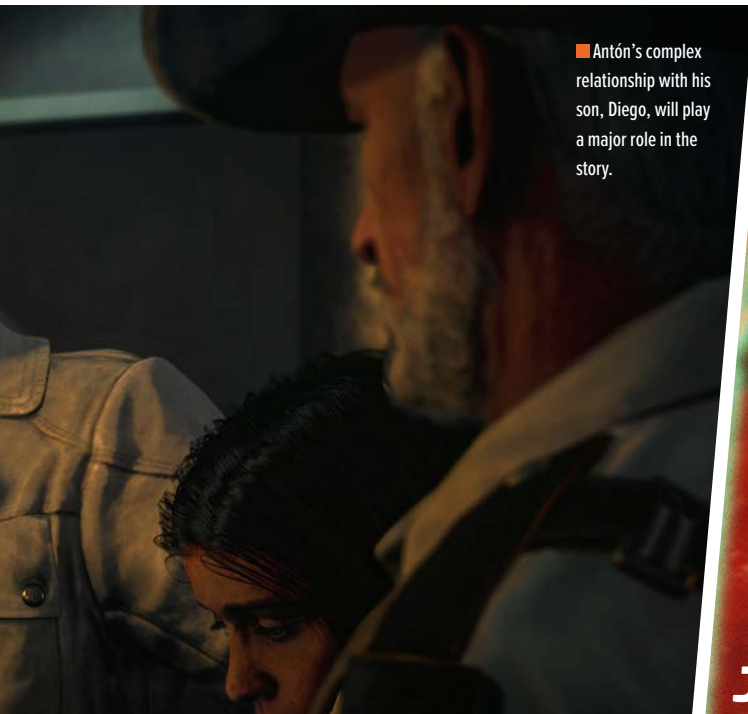
a buggy that can take to the skies by converting into a paraglider, in case you need to make a quick escape.

Of course, all that ante-upping comes atop the established *Far Cry* features, like the ability to recruit animals to fight alongside you, explosive storytelling, and a world packed with side content to discover.

Far Cry 6 isn't reinventing the wheel by any means, but it is focusing and expanding upon the ragtag spirit that's come to define the series. You might even call it a revolution in revolution. 



DIEGO CASTILLO



■ Antón's complex relationship with his son, Diego, will play a major role in the story.

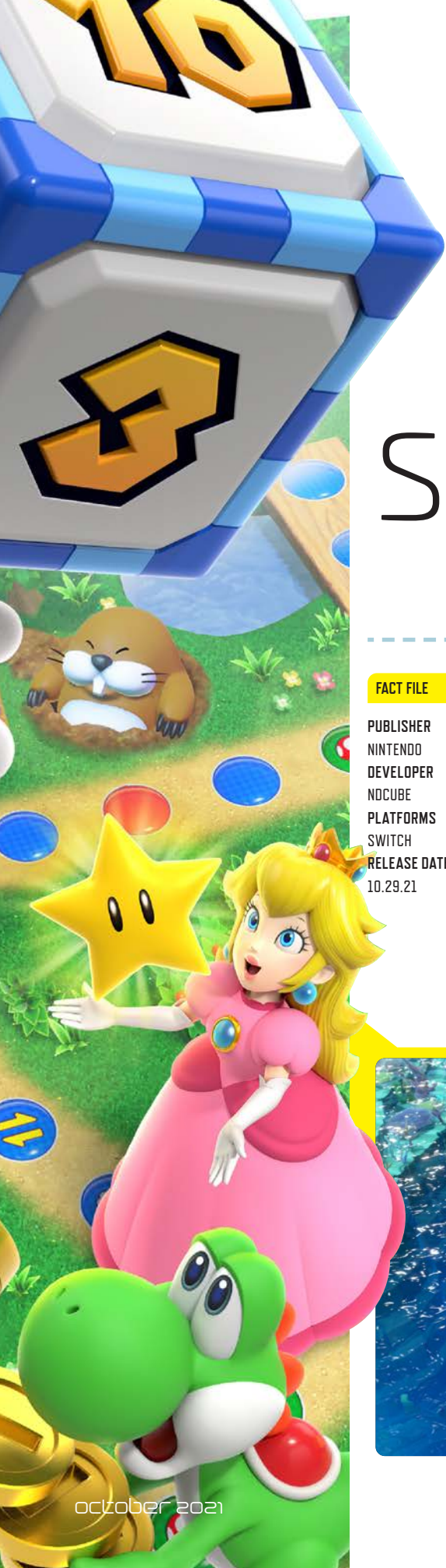


JUAN CORTEZ

preview

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MARIO PARTY SUPERSTARS

PARTY ALL THE TIME

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
DEVELOPER
NDCUBE
PLATFORMS
SWITCH
RELEASE DATE
10.29.21

The *Mario Party* series has been coming back in a big way on the Switch ever since 2018's *Super Mario Party*. Now, instead of creating a completely new game, Nintendo and NDCube are looking to remind players why they fell in love with the series in the first place with *Mario Party Superstars*.

The main draws for longtime *Mario Party* fans are the five remastered game boards from the Nintendo 64 era and 100 minigames from across the series.

Nintendo's so far unveiled two of the boards that will appear in

Superstars: Peach's Birthday Cake and Space Land. Compared to the version from the original *Mario Party*, the remastered desserts and delectables in Peach's Birthday Cake look so good you could eat them. Meanwhile, Bowser's Coin Beam on Space Land is even more menacing with its upgraded graphics, but the sneaky strategy of triggering the countdown clock to unleash the beam is just as tense and backstabby as you remember.

The 100 minigames included in *Mario Party Superstars* will similarly trigger a wave of nostalgia while



MINIGAMES GALORE

While the boards in a *Mario Party* might be the vehicle to get you to the fun, the hectic and competitive minigames are the destination. *Mario Party Superstars* is rich with minigames, boasting 100 from across the series' history. Here are some of our favorites:

STORM CHASERS

This four-player minigame tasks each player with carrying around a potted Piranha Plant and feeding it with enough water from a zippy raincloud that darts around the map. Just watch out for the Monty Moles tunneling beneath your feet!

SHY GUY SAYS

Patience is key in this four-player minigame. Reacting to whether Shy Guy raises the red flag or the white flag requires some quick thinking, but it's important not to jump the gun unless you want him to cut you loose.

LOOK AWAY

An underappreciated 1v3 gem, one person needs to face in the same direction as the other three players, who have five chances not to be caught looking the same way.



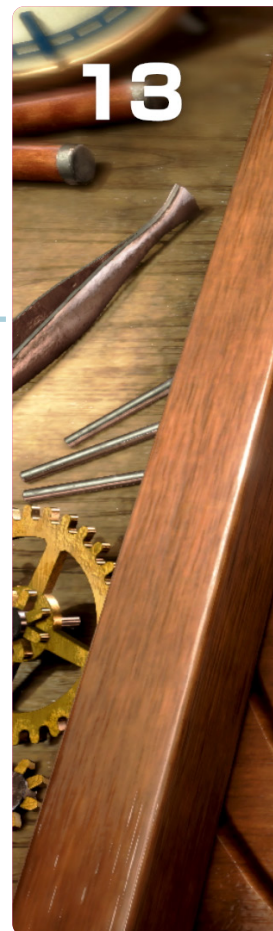
looking even better than you remember. Although the majority of these minigames will come from the N64 and GameCube editions, Nintendo's hinted that more modern favorites could make an appearance.

So far, promotional materials have given us glimpses of classic four-player minigames like Mushroom Mix-Up, Shy Guy Says, and Bowser's

Big Blast, 1v3 games like Boulder Ball and River Raiders, and even 1v1s like Vine With Me. *Superstars* tells you which *Mario Party* each minigame debuted in on the practice screen, should you wish to brush up on series history.

While *Mario Party Superstars* technically looks a lot like *Super Mario Party*, it's also giving you a lot more

***Superstars* lets you take advantage of the Switch's versatility by using the console's full range of control schemes.**





■ New stamps can help you celebrate your hard-earned victories (or protest your totally unfair defeats).



choice when it comes to *how* you play. Instead of limiting each player to one Joy-Con, *Superstars* lets you take advantage of the Switch's versatility by using the console's full range of control schemes.

That means you can play in hand-held mode on the Switch or Switch Lite, with a Switch Pro controller, or with two Joy-Cons if you want. Of course, you can also use a single

Joy-Con and share the other with a friend if you're playing together in the same room. Finally, *Superstars* lets you play against friends or strangers over the internet with its online matchmaking, as long as you have a Switch Online subscription.

You can get ready to join the party by pre-ordering *Mario Party Superstars* now on [Walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com) or visiting your local Walmart store. 🍄





93
100

GAME OF THE MONTH

MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR

FLYING HIGH

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

Across the 78 issues of *Walmart Gamecenter* we've now produced, it's fair to say that *Microsoft Flight Simulator* is one of the most challenging reviews we've ever done. In concept, the game is simple: Step into the pilot's seat of one of a wide variety of aircraft, then take to the skies. In practice, its depth is unbelievably immense and unlike any other game. There is no end boss to beat. No high score to reach. No completion point in any sense, really.

And yet, that's part of the game's beauty. *Microsoft Flight Simulator* offers up a digital recreation of our planet using satellite data from Bing Maps and powered by Microsoft's Azure AI, and then sets players free to explore it in whatever fashion they see fit. Like us, your first flight will

no doubt be buzzing your neighborhood, but from there, the whole world is your playground. Especially given all that's happened over the past year and a half, the sense of freedom and spirit of travel the game provides can really hit on an emotional level.

Of course, figuring out the controls for major aircraft and having no set goals may seem overwhelming and intimidating for some, but fear not. *Microsoft Flight Simulator* offers up a wide variety of flight training missions for getting comfortable both in the cockpit and in the sky. Meanwhile,

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
XBOX GAME STUDIOS
DEVELOPER
ASOBO STUDIO
PLATFORMS
XBOX SERIES X/S
RELEASE DATE
07.27.2021



options such as Discovery Flights, Landing Challenges, and Bush Trips provide more focused itineraries.

While flight sims have long been a staple of PC gaming, translating them to consoles has often proved especially complicated. Thankfully, Microsoft and developer Asobo Studio have really nailed the landing for *Microsoft Flight Simulator's* Xbox Series X/S arrival. While getting used to flying planes using fewer controller inputs can be difficult at first, the provided control schemes work far better than we'd expected. On a technical level, aspects like frame rate and world complexity might not always match what high-end PCs can provide, but all the work that's gone into the game's Earth model still shines here. Trust us, you'll never feel like you're missing out compared to those jumping in on a computer.

Microsoft Flight Simulator is the type of game that might not yet be on your radar, but it really should be. Though hard to define as a game, it's unquestionably amazing as an experience—and is a perfect alternative when you want something different from everything else that's out there. [G](#)

■ We know, this screenshot looks intimidating. But really, this is a game anyone can play.





1 ON 1

KEITA IIZUKA

PRODUCER, BANDAI NAMCO
GAME PRODUCER, SCARLET NEXUS

Bandai Namco's *Scarlet Nexus* is one of those video games that will instantly catch your eye, thanks to its unique visuals that mix stylish Japanese animation with gritty near-future techno punk aesthetics. Dig a little deeper, however, and you'll find an engrossing action RPG that is much more than just a pretty face. To learn more about everything that awaits players in New Himuka, we tracked down the game's producer, Keita Iizuka, to probe his brain for more information.

WGC: One of the key terms for *Scarlet Nexus* is "brain punk." What exactly is brain punk?

Keita Iizuka: The story is set in a future world where various devices can be operated and interacted with from within the brain through direct connection, and information is directly reflected in the individual's brain. In addition, the existence of Others that are hungry for developed human brains, and the "powers" that maximize the power of the brain and enable the user to cause supernatural events to happen, are the unique charms that are centered around the brain.

WGC: For anyone who might initially see *Scarlet Nexus* as yet another "anime-style action RPG," what makes the game stand out from everything else?

KI: I think what makes *Scarlet Nexus* stand out is of course the psionic action, where

players can use their powers to fight off enemies. They are also able to deepen their bonds with party characters and use their specific powers, while also getting their teammate's support during battles. *Scarlet Nexus* not only presents the classic RPG party battle, but also the aspect where the player (protagonist) is fighting alongside their allies and feeling the bonds with them.

WGC: *Scarlet Nexus* offers the choice between two main characters, Yuito Sumiragi and Kasane Randall. How does the experience of the game differ depending on which you play?

KI: The most fundamental and clear difference is easily the fact that the game's story

GAME HIGHLIGHTS

CODE VEIN, GOD EATER, TALES SERIES

can be experienced from two sides, but another point is how the two protagonists' battle styles and respective party characters differ from each other. For example, while Yuito fights enemies with katana melee attacks and has party members with close body powers like Sclerokinesis and Teleportation, Kasane uses middle-ranged attacks with her throwing knives while maintaining distance from enemies. Her party members' powers, such as Electrokinesis and Duplication, are also quite different, and deal great damage when hits are landed with correct timing.

WGC: *Scarlet Nexus* showcases a very unique artistic style, especially in terms of its world design and enemies. What can you tell us about the inspiration behind that style?

KI: For the expression of the world setting, we were influenced by Japanese animation and games from the '90s. In the design of buildings and vehicles, the Japanese taste of the '90s was incorporated and mixed with modern design. On top of that, we introduced a sense of "otherness" or "foreignness" in many areas to decorate the world. The abnormally tall towers, complex and unstable buildings, and the red neon lights in various locations are intended to express such foreignness.

WGC: In *Scarlet Nexus*, the main characters can draw upon the special abilities of their teammates. If you were partnered with Yuito or Kasane, and your special power was based upon your real-life talents, what ability would you lend them?

KI: I'm quite stubborn, and like to do things at my own pace. I don't easily give in to external stress psychologically, so my "mental strength" is the power I would like to lend to the heroes. The reason being, in such turbulent times (as depicted in *Scarlet Nexus*), I really sympathize with them, and would want to support them mentally! [@](#)

I think what makes *Scarlet Nexus* stand out is of course the psionic action, where players can use their powers to fight off enemies.

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Blood and Gore
Strong Language
Drug Reference

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